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RELIGION AND THE IMAGINATION

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That the subject is of great importance to those who seek a vitalizing conception of religion seems clear from the history of the connection between religion and the arts. On the lighter side the familiar illustration of dancing comes at once into the mind. When first men danced, they danced for the glory of God. Passing into a more serious mood, the history of dancing suggests the history of poetic measure; for it was through dancing that men beat out the laws of rhythmic utterance. Going deeper still, we know that all the liberal arts found their beginnings in religion. And more than their beginnings. The drama has never gone higher than the pitch to which the Greeks carried it, and in their conception of it from beginning to end, the connection is plain. Architecture, lifting itself above the level of naked utility in order to honor the Deity, in the same service has attained its highest flights.

But it may be thought that, while the connection between religion and the work of high imagination is necessarily close in the youth of the world, in the world's maturity it need not be so. Certainly our own age, with its manifold specializations of function, may seem to suggest this conclusion. Yet even in our time there is still one art, music, which refuses, when aiming at the best, to accept any mistress but religion. And one thing is certain: so far as the deepest interests of religion are concerned, our affairs at present are not so well organized that we may safely generalize upon our immediate experience. Not until the religious consciousness shall have had a new-birth and, after taking into itself that feeling for nature and for social obligation which is becoming characteristic of our age, shall have set itself to find the channels of enduring self-expression, would it be safe to infer that the connection between religion and the supreme forms of aesthetic emotion is any less close in the alleged maturity of the world than in its so-called youth.

In speaking on so grave and weighty a subject, I claim the freedom of an irresponsible layman who, lacking all technical knowledge and unhampered by the conscience of the specialist, judges things altogether in the light of their appeal to his own needs and their influence upon his personal feeling. At the outset of the *Laocoon*, Lessing contrasts three judges in the field of aesthetics—the philosopher, the art-critic, and the everyday lover of the beautiful. For the last of the three all judgments are built on the fact that the beautiful makes absent things present and identifies appearance with reality. This is the layman's point of view—the point of view from which I start, and back to which I shall continually return. And in particular I take the latter of Lessing's two counts in the layman's estimate as my text. The main effect of the beautiful is to overcome the dualism between reality and appearance, and so bring the mind to rest. In childhood we do not dream that our world shall some day break in two. It is all of one piece, a field of joyous action and self-expression wherein the material and spiritual, the body and the soul, form an indivisible unity. What things seem to be, things are. But, as we grow up, there comes a tragic breach in the unity and integrity of our world. The reality of things draws aloof from appearances. And the search for reality, for things that shall never make a promise to the ear only to break it to the heart, becomes the main end of an earnest life.

The history of our own mind is the history of the race writ small. In the selfsame way did Greek philosophy—the one philosophy which in its course wrought out with perfect coherence and intellectual beauty the logic of thought—run its career. In its first phase appearance and reality are indivisible; matter and mind are one; the universe is all alive with a continuous and unbroken meaning. In its second phase this unity is broken. Mind, distinguishing itself from nature, finds knowledge as a problem on its hands. And in the third phase, philosophy having wearied of the task of thinking appearance and reality together, the soul appeals to religion to overcome the dualism that is wrecking life. Religious emotion is to do what philosophy cannot do, and, surging through the restless heart of man, makes his world one again, and so grants him absolution and peace.

The simple and untrained lover of the beautiful finds, to repeat Lessing's words, that painting and poesy, by making absent things present, put his choicest emotions above the reach of time. We may well join to Lessing's words the fine saying of Charles Eliot Norton about the classic books; they are the books that are contemporary with all generations. The nobly beautiful brings the eternal into our midst, and naturalizes it. But this is contributory to the prime result, and that is to overcome the gulf between reality and appearance. In the presence chamber of beauty things are what they seem to be.

So far as the history of aesthetic theory comes home to the man who, deeply enjoying the beautiful, seeks for the root and ground of his pleasure, it is the modern aesthetic theory that chiefly concerns him. The fact that the ancients for the most part suggest aesthetic theory rather than develop it, the related fact that the bulk of modern theory is so large, points to the conclusion that the need of modern folk for the distinct and specific ministry of the beautiful is peculiarly compelling. With us the arts are consciously, in some cases deliberately, independent of religion. This is a situation which was quite foreign both to antiquity and to our own past so recent as the Middle Ages. One may apply to antiquity at large the well-known saying that there is no supernatural in Homer. Nature and the supernatural were everywhere one. And while, in the Middle Ages, nature and the supernatural were clearly distinguished, still the supernatural had such complete control of the situation, such entire predominance over the human spirit, that nature became a plastic symbol in the hands of the supernatural. But with the men of the post-Renaissance and post-Reformation period, nature and the supernatural became not only distinct but practically separate fields of being and spheres of action.

In Stoicism "God" and "nature" were inseparable. In Neoplatonism, widely as it differed from Stoicism in thought, the same thing held true for emotion. As a consequence, the religious consciousness and the sense of the beautiful slipped into each other without being aware of a break. But with us it is not so. We are apt to be aware of something going on, more or less like the jar produced by the coupling of cars, when we pass from one to the other. It may be that in the distant future, when the great revival of religion and

theology shall have got well under way, when the cosmic feeling which science is bringing to the birth shall have so matured as frankly to disclose its religious quality, we may once again attain, upon a higher level, the point of view, or rather the instinctive consciousness, of antiquity. Meanwhile, however, things being as they are, the modern needs the distinct and specific ministry of the beautiful. Our aesthetic theory is more or less a part of the answer to our demand for salvation.

Aristotle, the one ancient about whom the most casual reader is bound to know something, comes fairly close to being a modern. Just as his theory of evolution, since it was far ahead of his time, had to wait till our day to be clearly grasped and fully appreciated, so in a measure with his aesthetic theory. Unlike Plato, Aristotle was not deeply religious by nature. Unlike him also, he gave his mind and attention to scientific studies. To Plato the visible world is a symbol of the idea. To Aristotle it is an integral part of reality. Hence there is in him a distinct suggestion of the modern need and the modern theory. The visible universe is immensely real. The soul is not, as with Plato, quick and eager. Idealism has hands and feet, discards wings. So the problems of life are imperious, and, the appeal to religion not being instinctive, the need for the ministry of poetry in its highest form, the drama, becomes almost conscious. It is the function of the drama to purge the heart of pity and fear. One sees a noble character brought through fault and disaster to the lowest level of misery and shame; pity racks the mind of the onlooker. Before our eyes stands the hero, bent on the best things, yet twisted from his purpose and his plan of life wrenched from his hand by pitiless and irresistible circumstances; and our hearts are pierced through with dread, with a deep sense of our littleness and incompetence, and the fear of unseen and unsympathetic powers and tendencies that bear us on, without our will and say, to goals unknown and undesired. But the dramatic action weaves the tragedy into the context of life. The deep emotion it excites makes connections real even though uncomprehended, between the heart of man and the heart of things. Pain and disaster become somehow part of a larger plan, a wider law. And the sympathetic mind is cleansed of pity and fear, thus attaining sanity and peace.

Aristotle's theory, while not wholly appropriated in antiquity had many conscious or unconscious imitations. One is tempted to think that we catch an echo of it in Vergil's noble line: *Sunt lachrymae rerum ac mentem mortalia tangunt*. Beyond doubt, it is consciously in the mind of Dion Chrysostom when he sets himself to describing the impression left on the imagination by the Olympian Zeus of Pheidias. "Let a man whose soul is at hard labor, and who has drunk the cup of disaster and sorrow to the dregs, once stand before this statue; he will forget all the terrors and the woes of human life" (*Ov.* 12:51). The note is distinctly modern.

For by modern feeling we mean the feeling of the European or American who is acutely awake to the problems of life as it must be lived by men who are sincere and whole-hearted in their devotion to the life of the nation in its entirety. There is a ready shield against the keenest edge and sharpest point of these problems, if a man will only forget his ancestry. The sweet and urgent mysticism that has its birth and breeding in India bids one leave the affairs of state to the men who have no distinct bias for the spiritual. To be sure, this is not altogether easy. For so ingrained in us is the interest in political and social problems that, strive as we may to forget, the social ideal will persist, to borrow a phrase from *The Wild Duck*, in sending us duns. But if we can attain to perfect absenteeism, if we can think the state off the field of primary reality, then the problem is solved—at least its point is broken. The heart that is pierced through with many sorrows drinks of the river of forgetfulness.

But this voice we cannot, as loyal sons of the West, listen to. For us as for Aristotle—nay, for us even more than for Aristotle—the state possesses primary reality. Consistent mysticism may tempt, but it cannot convince us. We stand fast in our place within a society dreaming of freedom. We may not hope to escape the awful problems which the nation presses upon us. Rather, as becometh men of our descent, we bare our breasts to them. We will have no peace that is to be purchased by flinching from the supreme task of conscience. Our problems are our heritage. If we cannot live with them, we will die with them. And the universe, finding us in this mood, presses in on us with its unmeasurable being. The cozy parochial conceptions of our fathers are gone forever. The vastness

of our world terrifies while inspiring us. Its air of indifference to our woes and sorrows is so serene that it becomes majestic. If the storm "pities neither wise men nor fools," yet as a storm it is magnificent. But the majesty of the universe in league with its indifference makes the problem of life acute. Not for long can the mystic get us away from its compelling interest. We must stand fast, seeking to find our place and fulfil our function within the visible order of things. Like the mediaeval serf, we are written down in the law code of the cosmos as belonging to a definite nook and corner of mother Earth. Less and less can we conscientiously appeal our vital causes to the future life for settlement. The snow, falling from our heaven, no longer covers over the hideousness and the horror within life as it is. We face things as they are, and, no matter how great may be our faith in the future, the present situation strikes to the heart with irresistible pain.

Aristotle has this modern quality in a measure. It is the large possession of it that makes Kant so deeply representative. On the one side, he caught the full impact of the modern conception of the universe. On the other side, he carried the philosophic conception of reason to the full length of mental initiative. Sharing with Rousseau that splendid interest in the rights of the common people which was the ennobling passion of the revolutionary period, he, with all the idealists of his age, made freedom his supreme end. The philosophic reason is wholly incompetent to ground and base man's belief in freedom. The philosophic argument for the existence of God as the sufficient support of the ideal world and its interests, riddled by criticism, sinks to the bottom. So far as philosophy can carry us, we stand in a world of unsolved contradictions. Encompassing and assailing us is the realm of natural necessity. In our souls is the ideal of freedom, of ethical initiative, and of creative moralizing power. What help can the eye and the ear bring to us? For the besieged heart of man, what cheer?

Here is the birthplace of the Kantian theory of beauty. Beauty, in all its varied appeals to us, is detached from and superior to bare utility. To use Schiller's thought, it shares in the freedom of play. Just as in play we attest to ourselves our possession of a nature larger than our plans and our work can account for, so in the field of

the beautiful we are naturalized within a world too large for the conception of natural necessity to account for. The effect of the beautiful, lifting us above sensation and logic, enfranchises us. This effect is carried to its height by the noblest form of beauty, called the sublime. The sublime frightens our senses and threatens them with disorganization; but the spirit within us, answering the spur and appeal of the beautiful, rises above the world of the senses. This form of beauty, as Wordsworth says, "hath terror in it." Yet the terror is within the beauty, does not stand outside it as a destructive critic. And in that sanctuary of supreme beauty man's spirit, tortured by the unsolved contradictions of life, attains, at least for a time, heart's ease and serenity.

When Kant's thought is stripped of its technical terminology, it turns out to be the clue to the deepest modern feeling regarding beauty. Schopenhauer's striking theory of aesthetic absolutism comes to the same end. Tortured by the restless will to become what he is not, man enters the presence of some supreme work of art and there finds sanctuary. For in the nobly beautiful the will passes completely into its work. The work contents the will. The will rests in its work. So the tormenting thirst for something that is not is quenched and satisfied. "The heavy and the weary weight of all the unintelligible world is lightened." One's debt to the ideal is paid in full. For the time being, the actual is the ideal. The straining purpose in us is absolved. The peace of the universe allays life's fever.

Beauty justifies existence. In so far as man creates it, it expresses his control over the materials of experiences. Thus the higher fairy-story, made, as Lowell says, "out of the dream of the poor," is a triumphant love-match between the desire for happiness and the desire for justice. "Once on a time," it opens; and these words sometimes bring pathos into the minds of men and women. But for the child, the true owner of Fairyland, there is no hint of pathos. Fairyland is a land absolutely real in the imagination, a world where boy and girl live with Homer and the ancients, obliterating the distinction between nature and the supernatural. Loving desire has its way unchecked. Man "draws his frontiers where he pleases." Hence the shock inflicted on the child's imagination by the conclusion to the *Puritanical Pedagogue's* edition of *Aladdin*: "He awoke and

found that he had been fast asleep on his father's shop board!" It brings the child's fancy to earth with a violent jar. It undoes the very constitution of the fairy-story. It sins against the laws of that imagination that "peoples space with life and mystical predominance." It is a square circle or wooden iron, or any other impossible thing you please. By the judgment of catholic emotion, the judgment of all children, at all times and in all places, it should be expurgated from the true text.

Again, the love-story finds a sufficient motive and an ample justification in the self-same need of absolution from the merciless grip of circumstance and fate. In the lover's mind, the eternal is within the present, soul and body are one, the ways and means of living joyously respond to the creative word, and enobling passion finds a thoroughfare through the world. So, too, on the highest levels of beauty. The starry sky makes us fresh and strong, by filling us with the joyous conviction that the deepest desires of our hearts are one with the constitution and tendency of nature; and that the Power that moves our wills, when they are working at their best, also moves the sun and other stars. Nature, in her noblest moods, takes the ashes of our defeated hopes and, giving us beauty in exchange, completely justifies our existence, blesses us with a peace that is only less deep than the peace of God. Or, is it a constituent part of the peace that is divine and abiding?

And the means whereby this effect is served? Primarily it is the unifying of sensation and reason. We can all testify that in those rare moods when the aesthetic pleasure has been at its highest pitch, "thought was not, in enjoyment it expired." The beautiful appeals deeply to our senses. It is a supreme poet who tells us that poetry of the grand style must be "simple, sensuous, and impassional." And Milton's verse—verse which, taken at its height, is, possibly, almost the noblest English verse that has been written—illustrates the truth of this assertion; for in it the moral passion of heroic Puritanism has made a love-match with the genius of a supremely gifted artist. The result is a majestic sweetness that fills us with radiant pleasure, while at the same time the pleasure is instinct with exalted thinking and noble planning. The appeal to the senses is an inherent part of imaginative power. A chair built to the body naturalizes us

in a world where ease is elemental. Place the chair before the open fire, and the fire and the chair together suggest a world where ease and longing are at one. Let the hour be eventide, when the shadows are teaching the light to remember, and the appeal to one's nature is still wider and deeper. Recollection, faith, hope, pathos, and love, all blending with pleasurable feeling, render the day-dreams that come to us at such times almost convincing, not easy to forget. Choose a house by the sea, where the low-voiced, intimate talk between the great deep and a familiar shore comes in to blend with the silence, and there the appeal takes on a noble form. One thinks of Prometheus chained to his cliff and hearing the ceaseless laughter of the sea. From that mighty personification of the majesty and pathos, the hope and the terror of our existence, the mind turns irresistibly to the Hebrew prophet's personification of the law of the higher life, the suffering servant of the Lord. One's whole nature is stirred, one's entire being appealed to. But in the ascent from the pleasurable ease of the chair to the highest level of emotion, at every step the appeal to sensation is strong and compelling. Lose that, and imagination falls from its supreme place and power to the plane of homiletic allegory.

Nature in her noble moods overemphasizes rather than underemphasizes this appeal to sensation. A vast wheat-field in the American or Canadian Northwest, enjoyed just before the harvesters strike in, sends against the eye wave after wave of color, submerging the mind in rich and fruitful feeling. The sky of the Rockies, a sort of perpetual northwest sky, enables the eye to make a happy marriage with the universe. Or rather, since in such uplifting moods we are delivered from the tyranny and torture of subjective consciousness, the universe becomes an irresistible wooer and makes a joyful marriage with the eye. Through intimate and ennobling beauty, nature weds the heart of man to the heart of things.

The physiological effect of beauty is to quicken the pulse, start the blood, and set in motion a vitalizing flood of feeling, thus flushing the veins with a radiant sense of competence and ease. While the spell lasts, existence is unvexed, and our strength is equal to our day.

The secret of noble imagination, then, is a high conception charged with feeling. Through the beautiful, reason and conscience, pressing

close to a life larger than consciousness, take nurture from the breasts of immeasurable being. The infinite becomes intimate with the finite. The unseen universe enters into covenant with the visible world. Or, to put it better, for a little while we are lifted above our false italics. There is a single world, and a single meaning runs through it from top to bottom. While reason painfully struggles toward a perfect synthesis, imagination reaches the goal, visualizing the unity of things. Appearance and reality are made one. Our experience and our education so drill analysis into us that, bye and bye, the habit of walking around things, of trying to get in behind them, becomes a disease. But beauty cures us of the disease. There is no being to be found behind it; the whole of being is in it. Upon the beautiful the restless mind comes to rest.

Nothing can be nobly beautiful unless the eye and the reason work together without a hitch or jar. This is the explanation of the fact that the vast cannot by itself be beautiful. If vastness be its decisive and dominant quality, it runs into the vague. And then the judgment is at odds with the eye. A great cliff, like El Capitan at the Yosemite, viewed from the base, is over half a mile of height, more than three thousand feet sheer. But the eye cannot come up to one's judgment. We pinch ourselves, violently nudge our senses, to make them perceive what they ought to perceive. All in vain! The eye and the judgment are hopelessly at odds. Behind the eye, judgment is at hard labor. The heavy guns of statistics come lumbering up. But the eye simply denies their competence. The great cliff is immensely interesting, and never for a moment ennobling. In striking contrast is the grand cañon of the Yellowstone. Here the vastness of the gorge, the majestic reach of the cliff, is wedded to an indescribable spread and loveliness of color. The result is that vastness becomes tributary to something higher than vastness. The judgment and the eye are instinctively in unison. There is no consciousness of mental labor. The seer is all eye, if you will. But just as truly is he all soul. His soul is in his eyes. The majestic loveliness of the cañon suffuses him with a divine content. The universe is one and indivisible, and through the eye he falls heir to it.

So, again, the unifying effect of high imagination is clearly seen in the influence that certain places have over us. In a way they are

sacraments, in which the seen and the unseen perfectly blend. Rome, Athens, Jerusalem—in such places history is visualized. An American who has read all there is to read on the Gettysburg campaign does not truly know the great event. But let him, having digested his knowledge, spend a day by himself on the battle-field. A strange thing happens. His knowledge becomes a different thing. History takes a visible form. Standing on the stone wall where the charge of the gallant southerners broke, he lives the event over again. In his own person he takes part. He catches his breath as he realizes the closeness of the issue. History is a living presence. And he feels the unity of the nation as if it were the touch of a living hand, great and gentle, laid on his head in blessing and in consecration.

The work of the imagination is to visualize the invisible. The beautiful bodies forth the soul of things. Thus legend sometimes has a truth superior to scientific knowledge of the past. Criticism rejects its details, cashiers its testimony on this or that point. But legend is the artist of history. For details as such it has no concern. While it does not consciously neglect correctness, it does not deliberately aim at it. Legend deals with the soul of history. Its heroes are our contemporaries. Its events happen in the heart of man. Its truth is the truth of creative imagination using history as its raw material. Even so with all noble forms of the beautiful. Imagination is not fancy. Fancy plays on the surface of things. Its truth is the truth of impressions, of passing moods and temporary interests. It is an escape from reality. But imagination controls reality. It deals in the fundamental. The presence of the beautiful is the audience chamber of the eternal. Watson's line, "Time trembled at the opening of the rose," occurs to us. And Matthew Arnold's criticism of the Celtic fancy, on the ground that it is in collision with reality, is admirably in point. Fancy plays over life. Imagination goes to the root of life, and so gives us the Greek and the Shakspearian drama, whose reality is as well guaranteed as the existence of the tides and the stars.

A final illustration is a noble biography, the story of a life that is a meeting-place of the seen and unseen. We talk about this world and the other world. It is our crude experience that gives us our school-girl italics. The world is one. And in the noble lives lived

now and then in our midst the world's unity is revealed to us with convincing power. A great biography lays bare the secret of the free spirit. Events and circumstances are faithfully drawn, but so drawn that they become a living body informed by a living soul. History, said Aristotle, is a poor drama, full of episodes. But a great biography is dramatic through and through. It unifies the seen and the unseen. And "mankind is enriched by a joyous and refreshing story," to use the dear phrase we find at the end of Bayard's life.

The layman's impressions of beauty sum up to this; the beautiful brings him into quickening touch with the invisible. Through high imagination, the perfect, the ultimate reality, becomes a real presence. Keats' lines, of which, happily, only the first is hackneyed, publish the secret.

A thing of beauty is a joy forever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.
Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways
Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits.

Turning to religion, I do not propose a complete analysis of its nature and effects, but shall seek to carry the analysis far enough to make plain the relation between religion and the imagination. Now, in the aesthetic consciousness, while the visible and the invisible are unified, the emphasis falls on the visible. But in religious feeling taken in its deeper forms, the emphasis falls on the invisible. This stands out in the history of the idea of God, which rises out of consciousness when the pressure of unfriendly circumstances threatens man with demoralization. The arguments for the existence of God, whatever may be their apologetic value, have immense worth as part and parcel of idealizing thought. They are the product of the mental

effort to keep the scheme of life coherent, to lay unseen and eternal foundations for experience in time and space, to insure and safeguard the worth-whileness of human existence. Necessarily the emphasis is laid upon the invisible. The religious consciousness, whenever it is impassioned, forgets second causes. Only the First Cause counts. Yet, while the emphasis differs, the effect in terms of feeling is very much the same. It is the real presence of the unseen within the visible and tangible order of things with which vital religion is concerned. This is made plain by the belief in the personality of God. Human personality, when it is high above the level of average humanity, becomes a trysting-place where the visible and the invisible hold loving communion. The personality of God, judged by its effects on feeling, accomplishes the same result on a greater scale. God conceived as an omnipotent Person brings all the power and resources and tendencies of the unseen universe within reach of the struggling human purpose, the straining will, and puts them into man's service. The visible and the invisible worlds are unified, becoming parts of a single context of experience and meaning.

The methods adopted by religion throw clear light on the matter under consideration. In proportion to the depth and persistence of religious emotion is the necessity for sacraments—made up of symbolical words and dramatic actions—by whose means the ardent believer is assured of the unity of life in its entire reach and range, so that the things unseen and uncomprehended befriend and enlarge what he sees and understands. Of all sacraments the appeal to sensation is a necessary and constituent part. On the lower levels, a great mass of facts is in evidence, such as the *taurobolia* or blood-bath in the religion of Mithras, the “dancing dervishes,” the “holy jumpers,” and the coarse forms of revivalism the world over. But it is just as true of sacraments on the highest levels of religious feeling, unless having altogether ceased to be real sacraments, they shall have shriveled to bare doctrinal declarations, lacking all vitalizing power.

Again, the dependence of religion on music goes to show the same thing. How great is the difference between the “comfortable words” of our Lord, “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest,” if never so well read, and the same words sung in the *Messiah* by a sweet and noble woman's voice. The music, allying itself to the words, carries it to the very depth of our

being. The undermeanings and suggestions of life come into consciousness; all of them, however great the pains of memory they bring, convince us for the moment that all is well with our world. Of similar nature is the effect of the hymn. Hymn-singing, when it is greatly done, produces a kind of conviction that is vitally different from the results of philosophic reasoning. It brings the distant ends of life close home. Inference takes wings and becomes vision. On the lower side, it partakes of the emotion excited by a good, though not too heavy, dinner—a glow of comfortable feeling that temporarily saps the foundations of doubt and mistrust. On the higher side, it is of the same nature with the joy of a June day which catches us up, body and reason and spirit together, into a mood of ecstatic content. The conviction born of the marriage between word and music is a radiant conviction. The moral corrosive of a half-hearted faith is overcome. The understanding is quieted. The soul is glad.

The deepest difference between the aesthetic and the religious conviction is that the latter deals primarily with the unknown. From the earliest days of organized religion, as we find it at work in Chaldea down to the relation between religion and science in our own time, this law holds true. Chaldean magic inseparably bound up with prayer, and Chaldean astronomy or astrology inseparably connected with theology, aimed to rid man of the fears which would, if not arrested, unman and demoralize him. This they did by bringing the unknown into friendly and sympathetic relations with the intelligible. And when once our heads are cleared touching the controversy over religion and science, we shall find that the nature of religion, beneath all the changes in ideals and in methods, has remained unchanged. It consciously and deliberately concerns itself with the things that put fear and misgiving into the heart of man. Its objective point is a deep relationship, an indestructible covenant, between the known and the unknown.

But, when all is said that can be said regarding the difference between the religious and the aesthetic consciousness, we return to the strong likeness between them. The resemblance is profound. Judged by their enduring effects, they are at one. Just in proportion as religious certitude differs from the conclusions of abstract reasoning does the likeness become striking. In both, the emotional consequence is the real presence of the unseen. The appeal to sensation is

essential. Everything turns on how it shall be made or how it may be controlled. No one needs to be reminded that the plague of religion is the greedy appetite for rich sensation, and that not a few forms of religious exaltation do not differ in their moral quality from the exaltation of imperfect drunkenness. Religion, on the lowest as well as on the highest levels, seeks to bring the mystery of the unseen into the heart of the believer. "What have I if I have not all?" cries the youth in Schiller's "Veiled Image at Sais." "For in the sacrament one crumb is all," says the adoring woman in "How Lisa Loved the King." In impassioned religious emotion soul and body become parts of an organic unity. An uprush of feeling floods the mind. The unknown is the divine, and the divine is a real and quickening presence. Lacking this, we have not vital religion at all, but either a cold and cheerless theory that resembles religion pretty much as a herbarium resembles a flower garden, or a dilettantism that adopts the tasting of emotion as its hobby.

Religion is necessarily sensuous, for in it the supreme form of idealism triumphantly asserts its power over the mass of men. It is an impassioned conviction that the unseen things, not the things we see, possess primary reality. And then it is an equally impassioned conviction that the unseen ends and issues of life have the right of way. A thousand things deny it. The love of pleasure and place and power, face and fashion and fate, assail it. The sorrows and disillusionments of existence undermine our faith. Yet, in spite of all, when the Christian consciousness is at its best, there is a serene and radiant conviction that the way of the Christ shall some day be the way of the world. And, in order to publish this conviction with convincing force, religion must take imagination into her service.

The aesthetic sense and the religious consciousness are, then, very closely related. But what is the nature of this relation? Matthew Arnold, in the introduction to Ward's *English Poets*, declared that "Poetry is the guide of life." When he coined the sentence, he was no doubt thinking of Bishop Butler's proposition, "Probability is the guide of life." And he is right, if we mean by "poetry" high reasoning that has passed into noble imagination. For only so can the will in our breasts that makes for righteousness visualize the distant end of our mortal struggle with the lower self. But the final question is: Where lies the ultimate source and spring of great

poetry? Verse is an easy thing to come by. Charming poetry is relatively easy. But poetry of the grand style, poetry that masters the hearts of earnest folk and braces their wills—where is it born and how is it nurtured? Lange ends his history of materialism with the frank confession that man cannot live by science alone, and, theology having been thrown on the scrap-heap, poetry and art must feed him. Again we will agree. But, once more, the previous question must be put: How are we to insure the possibility of poetry of the grand style? We might appeal to the history of art and literature to show that creative periods of interpretation and expression have been on intimate terms with ardent, and if you will, even naïve religion. At this point, however, we are concerned not so much with the history as with the nature of things.

Bosanquet, in his *History of Aesthetic* (p. 21), criticizing Plato's subordination of the beautiful to the moral, says:

Beauty . . . is really an expression, co-ordinate with the moral order as a whole and not bound under its rules, of that larger complication and unity of things which reflects itself in the sense of beauty on the one hand, and on the other hand in the social will.

He is quite right, so far as the nature of beauty is concerned. Beauty is not subordinate to the good. The artist is in his rights against the moralist. The beautiful and the good are co-ordinate expressions of an unseen compelling reality. But Bosanquet falls into deep error through not considering, on the spot, the relation between the beautiful and the good, taken together on the one side, and religious feeling on the other. When he says that beauty, with the "social will," is a co-ordinate expression of ultimate reality, he leaves out of sight some very vital history. For art without leisure or free time is impossible. Now, leisure is the fruit of co-operative labor both on the lower economic levels and on the higher social and political levels. Athens is within and behind the supreme form of classic literature and art. But how was Athens made? That is another way of asking: "How is the social will made?" The secret of the social will lies underneath high art. The supreme problem is the problem of law. How to ground and bottom the social will? It can be done only by religion in one form or another. The heart of man must be brought into an indestructible covenant with the unseen and unknown forces of the universe. While the work of grounding the

social will is going on, imagination and the moralizing will constitute an indivisible unity. After it is done and when leisure gives use to specializations of function, the artist and the Puritan come to blows. Both are right; both are wrong. The beautiful and the good are in equal subjection to the unseen, neither being subject to the other.

So, too, with the true. At the end of his noble essay on the *Scientific Use of the Imagination*, Tyndall writes:

In his hours of health and strength and sanity, when the stroke of action has ceased and the pause of reflection has set in, the scientific investigator finds himself overcome with . . . awe. Breaking contact with the hampering details of earth, it associates him with a power which gives fulness and tone to his existence, but which he can neither analyze nor comprehend.

Tyndall's use of the term "imagination" is inexact. For if any definite meaning is to be attached to "imagination," it means a conception visualized, an idea fused with sensation. Tyndall has in mind the function of hypothesis in its largest possible reach and scope. But in the words, "it associates him with a power which gives fulness and tone to his existence," there is a very clear suggestion of religion in its vital sense. Perhaps it was impossible for Tyndall to use the word "religion" in this connection, because it seemed to him to be heavily handicapped by associations that rendered a working alliance between science and religion impossible. For all that, there is a distinctly religious element in the situation which his words seek to cover. And his essay is a fine illustration of the inherent religious quality of science. Plotinus said that the beautiful was an ascent into the unseen. So is that ennobling love of truth which is the inspiration of science. Its soul is a potential religion, an enthusiasm for the universe which gives to the most insignificant facts an infinite value. The beautiful and the true and the good are co-ordinate expressions of an unseen, but an authoritative, reality. But conscious relation with this upholding and outreaching reality—this and nothing else is the pith and meaning of vital religion. Inevitably, then, religion has an imperative need of imagination. For only through the imagination can the unseen become and remain a real presence within the things that are seen. Reason can develop the context of thought into which our opinions must widen, if they would retain our respect. But this abstract reason cannot make the saving unities of life and mind compelling. To reach that end,

reason must ally itself to noble imagination. The philosopher must join forces with the poet. Then the unity of things, taking the complication of things up into itself, captures the eye of man, and so brings his restless heart to rest. This may not be done without religion. Great imagination is not possible upon a negative view of life. Doubt, piercing and cleansing doubt, is necessary. But somehow doubt itself must be incorporated into the indwelling unity of things. Or else, the imagination and the constructive will, going lame together, the world is cursed by men of the Hamlet and Sordello type, in whom thought "breaks yoke" with action.

On the one hand, religion is vitally necessary to the imagination; on the other hand, imagination is vitally necessary to religion. Without imagination, religion is crippled, inference being substituted for vision. Possibly, the new-birth of dogmatic theology may be helped along by the discovery that dogma, rightly apprehended, is an exercise of high religious imagination, and so is an inevitable part of earnest and spacious and enduring morality. Anyway, imagination is indispensable to religion. For it is the work of religion to stay the heart and steady the will by restoring to us, after the merciful cruelty of life has taken from us our childhood, the unity of our world. There is no other world than this. But the larger part of this world is the over-world; and by reason of the over-world, there is opened, within our being, an inner world in which our souls take sanctuary from the fret and fever of existence. Yet we are not mystics of the Hindoo type. The visible is immensely real. How, then, shall it frame itself to the invisible? That question is answered when moods of intense aesthetic pleasure fuse with moods of deep religious feeling. Then the saving work is completed. On Christmas Eve we hear the *Messiah* nobly rendered. The very beauty of it stirs us to keenest pain. Motherhood and babyhood in their ideal forms! And the great city with its horrors of lust and sense looking at us over the heads of the men and women who sing to us! But the surge of pain, of grief and terror and pity, that goes through the heart, is redemptive. By means of beauty the spiritual reality of things becomes compelling. One's whole being is brought into covenant with things unseen and eternal. We do not dare to be afraid regarding the final issues. We go forth to greet our world with a high purpose, a dauntless will, and a gladdening hope.